

**Testimony of Willow Dealy**  
**Appropriations Committee**  
**February 18, 2016**

Good evening, Senators and Representatives! My name is Willow Dealy. I live in Torrington & i get by on minimal Social Security Disability. I go every day to Prime Time House, certified by Clubhouse International. Without this community where i am accepted whether i'm having a depressed or anxious day, without this opportunity to contribute my services to others in need like myself, i would be home staring at the 4 walls, which would probably drive me to a suicide attempt. I've tried to be employed, over & over & over again, and i fall on my face every time, because of my mental illness. I need the meaningful volunteer work that Prime Time House gives me, because they understand that i'm often sick.

I have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, because all through my childhood my father threatened my life & abused me in every way. I have become afraid of people, so that i cannot even make friends. I have nightmares at night, and flashbacks & depression during the day. I need a place that is safe & supportive. It's hard to do the daily things to take care of myself. Therefore i also take recovery classes at Western Connecticut Mental Health Network in Torrington. Unfortunately, any field that involves people who cannot fend for themselves because of poverty or disability, that field attracts compassionate people who genuinely want to help, but it also attracts people who crave power, even the little power they can exercise over the dispossessed. Good is done, but wrongs are also committed. In such a case we need legal help to bring justice to bad situations. The Connecticut Legal Rights Project helps people like me, with low funds and mental disabilities, and they are funded *outside* Western Connecticut Mental Health Network, so there is not a conflict of interest.

When i went to CLRP, the paralegal person really understood my problems & wanted to help. She is also helping me create an advance directive, which is needed by people with mental disabilities because when we go into the hospital, this document states which treatments we know will help us & which treatments or facilities will make us worse. It speaks for us when we cannot speak for ourselves.

Cutting funding to Prime Time House would devastate me, & i know my fellow members feel the same. What would we do? Cutting funding to CLRP would invite certain people to trample on us, because we have so much difficulty fighting for our own rights. We don't have transportation, either, to go to some other city. We have so little, & we struggle so much with even ordinary things.

Programs such as these keep us out of the hospital & out of jail. Hospitalization is much more expensive than sane, productive involvement in our communities. If we were not in these programs, we would be out on the streets, getting drunk, getting high, committing crimes. This is destructive to ourselves, our communities, our families & loved ones, and our children, who need us to be our healthy selves.

Further, this state made a commitment to closing the old mental hospitals, which were horrible, & using the money much more cost-effectively in the home communities of such vulnerable people like me.

Programs in the community are vital to keeping us out of institutions. Please support the club-houses in this state that are certified by Clubhouse International, & please support the Connecticut Legal Rights Project!